

"Lucretius on the Size of the Sun", by T.H.M. Gellar-Goad

Post by "Bryan" of July 19, 2025 at 4:34 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"The Size Of The Sun Is As It Appears To Be!"

I wanted to share this section of Sextus Empiricus (fl.c. 200 CE), Against the Professions 7 (Against the Logicians/Dogmatists 1) 207-9, where he is arguing from the Epicurean perspective:

"Let us make the reasoning based on visible things in this way: the hard object is not seen as a whole, but only the color of the hard object. Of the color, one part is on the hard object itself (just as in things seen from nearby and from a moderate separation) – the other part is outside the hard object and underlying in the adjacent locations (just as with things envisioned from a distant separation). But this, being completely changed in the intervening space and taking on a particular shape, delivers such an appearance as the kind of thing which it also underlies in truth.

In just the same way, therefore, neither is the sound thoroughly heard in a bronze instrument that is being struck, nor the sound in the mouth of the man who shouted → but rather the sound that is falling upon our sensation.

And in the same way that no one says a person hearing a sound from a small distance hears falsely just because after he has come nearby he instead receives it as louder: in this way I would not say that vision is deceived because from a far separation it sees the tower as small and round, but from nearby as larger and tetragonal.

Vision truly reports. Even when the sensible object is apparent to vision as small and of a certain shape: it really is small and of a certain shape – due to the transmission through the air, as the edges of the films are being broken off.

And when it appears again large and differently shaped, it is again similarly large and differently shaped – since by now both appearances are not established as the same thing. This is what remains of distorted judgment: to suspect that the appearance envisioned from nearby and from far off was the same."